

NOTES :

SUBJECT :

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The other night I had a crippling pain in my side. It took me hours to get to sleep and all too soon it woke me up, just as dawn was breaking. I got up, dressed and set off on an aimless walk through Westminster's deserted streets. Nothing is as deserted as a London street at six o'clock on a Sunday morning. Half way up Victoria Street I passed a succession of huddled bundles of humanity in their sleeping bags in shop doorways. They were beginning to rouse themselves. There are few occasions when people are more vulnerable than when they are about to wake up. Still fewer occasions than when they wake homeless and hungry with the certainty of being homeless and hungry again the next day. One was already up. He was in his fifties, dressed as immaculately as he could manage, and I tried not to intrude on his privacy as I watched him fold his blanket with the precision of an ex-serviceman. He turned and combed his hair in the reflection of a bank's plate glass window. He pulled the flaps out of pockets and carefully checked that his collar was turned down before turning to face the new day. Knowing how close I was to being in his position, I felt his vulnerability acutely. I knew how important I too would find it to look my best when feeling my worst. I saw myself in the next plate glass window as I passed by and saw how similar we looked. About ten minutes later, past Westminster Abbey, past the Houses of Parliament, past Edward III's treasure house, I turned into the discreet...

*This unfinished article would have gone on to describe two police officers parking their car in Victoria Street and crossing the road to approach doorways where homeless men were sleeping. The police began to stamp on the fingers of the sleeping men and to kick them in the kidneys when they turned away. The victims were trapped in their sleeping bags and couldn't avoid the blows. I decided that morning that I could no longer bear to live in England. I had breakfast at a greasy-spoon café in the north-east corner of Vincent Square as soon as it opened and found myself sitting at a table beside the disgraced Jonathan Aitken who was awaiting trial for perjury. We nodded hello to each other and got on with our bacon and eggs and mugs of steaming tea. I would have liked in this article to describe how a number of marginalised people started their day in their own particular ways..*